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Eighth meeting of persons chairing the
human rights treaty bodies
Geneva, 15-19 September 1997

PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND ANNOTATIONS

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The eighth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies will be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 15 to 19 September 1997. The first meeting will be convened on Monday, 15 September 1997, at 10 a.m.

2. This document contains the provisional agenda for the eighth meeting of chairpersons, prepared by the Secretary-General, together with annotations relating thereto.

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PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting.

2. Election of the officers of the meeting.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Organizational and other matters.

5. Review of recent developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies.

6. Improving the operation of the human rights treaty bodies.

7. Cooperation of human rights treaty bodies with United Nations specialized agencies, funds, programmes, mechanisms and with regional organizations.

8. Cooperation of human rights treaty bodies with non-governmental organizations.

9. Gender perspectives in the work of the treaty bodies.

10. Prevention of human rights violations, including early warning and urgent procedures.

11. Assistance to States in implementing treaty body recommendations.

12. Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and five-year review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

13. Adoption of the report to the General Assembly.

ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting will be opened by the representative of the Secretary-General, who will act as temporary chairperson until a chairperson is elected.

2. Election of the officers of the meeting

A chairperson and a rapporteur will be elected from among the treaty body representatives at the meeting.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The meeting will adopt its agenda, which it may decide to revise at any time.

4. Organizational and other matters

Under this agenda item, the meeting will consider its programme of work. In this connection, it may be noted that in accordance with the chairpersons' recommendations (A/50/505, paras. 24 and 27, A/51/482, paras. 31 and 49-57), representatives of the specialized agencies and other organizations within the United Nations system, regional intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, have been invited to the eighth meeting and as in the past my intervene in the discussions at the discretion of the Chairperson.

It should be noted that any recommendations of the meeting of chairpersons with potential financial implications require that relevant financial statements be prepared by the Secretariat. The meeting must be so informed prior to their adoption.

5. Review of recent developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies

Under this agenda item, each participant may wish to make a brief oral review of recent developments of special concern to the respective treaty bodies. The meeting may also wish to discuss under this item the High Commissioner's Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Child and the Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

6. Improving the operation of the human rights treaty bodies

Various initiatives to improve the operation of the treaty bodies are expected to be considered under this agenda item. The chairpersons will have

before them (a) the final report of the independent expert, Mr. Philip Alston, on enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty systems (E/CN.4/1997/74); (b) the reports of the Secretary-General on the status of the international human rights instruments and the general situation of overdue reports (HRI/MC/1997/3) and (c) on improving the operation of the human rights treaty bodies (HRI/MC/1997/2). It may be noted that the latter includes information on follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the seventh meeting of chairpersons and on initiatives for enhancing the effectiveness of the human rights treaty bodies. The meeting will also be provided with a briefing on the outcome of three consultations on the future of the treaty system held at Potsdam, Germany in November 1996, Cambridge, United Kingdom in March 1997 and Toronto, Canada in June 1997, respectively.

In addition, the following documentation will be provided to the chairpersons:

(a) Report of the sixth and seventh meetings of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies (A/50/505 and A/51/482);

(b) Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.157/23);

(c) Relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, including resolution 51/87 on the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights;

(d) Relevant resolutions and decisions of the Commission on Human Rights, including decisions 1997/104 on the status of the International Covenants on Human Rights, and 1997/105 on the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights; and resolutions 1997/69 on comprehensive implementation and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action; 1997/76 on strengthening the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights, 1997/43 on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system and 1997/17 on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights;

(e) Compilation of general comments and general recommendations adopted by human rights treaty bodies (HRI/GEN/1/Rev.3);

(f) Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(g) Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

(h) Report on UNFPA Round Table on Women's health rights, including reproductive and sexual health.

7. Cooperation of human rights treaty bodies with United Nations specialized agencies, funds, programmes and mechanisms and with regional organizations

The High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights and UNDP are engaged in consultation aiming at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The draft Memorandum of Understanding envisages close cooperation in a number of key areas, including the promotion of the principal human rights treaties and various reporting procedures. Additionally, UNDP is invited to inform the chairpersons of further developments and the possibility of improved cooperation including at the field level. ILO, UNHCR, UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF and UNAIDS are invited to provide similar information at this meeting.

8. Cooperation of treaty bodies with non-governmental organizations.

As recommended by the chairpersons at the seventh meeting, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) will be offered the opportunity to report on past and present cooperation with the treaty bodies, and to discuss the modalities of future cooperation, in particular how better to support universal ratification of the human rights treaties and the adoption of enabling legislation so that decisions and recommendations of the treaty bodies can be implemented at the national level.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are expected to identify issues of concern and formulate concrete proposals on how to improve cooperation with the treaty bodies on monitoring and follow-up at the national level, particularly with regard to concluding observations under the participating procedure and decisions under the communications procedures. International NGOs are invited to elaborate on the manner in which they are encouraging and supporting national affiliates to cooperate with the treaty bodies.

9. Gender perspective in the work of the treaty bodies

The chairpersons may wish to report on progress made by their respective treaty bodies in considering how they could most effectively incorporate into their work practices the proposals referred to in paragraph 58 of document A/51/482. The chairpersons who attended the Round Table organized by UNFPA, HC/CHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women on approaches of human rights treaty bodies concerning women's health with a focus on reproductive and sexual health rights may wish to report on its conclusions. It is planned to set aside one half-day for consideration of this issue in the context of the State reporting procedure.

10. Prevention of human rights violations, including early warning and urgent procedures

Under this agenda item, the chairpersons may wish to resume discussion on action to be taken by treaty bodies in cooperation with United Nations organs and bodies to prevent human rights violations.

11. Assistance to States in implementing treaty body recommendations

Several General Assembly and Commission on Human Rights resolutions refer to the usefulness of technical assistance and advisory services in helping States parties to comply with their obligations under United Nations human rights instruments. At their seventh meeting the chairpersons recommended that all programmes of human rights technical assistance be planned and implemented with the full cooperation and collaboration of all relevant parties, especially those which benefit from a presence in the country concerned. The meeting may wish to review the extent of progress achieved in this respect.

12. Fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration and five-year review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

As recommended in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.157/23. Paras.99-100) adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993, special attention should be paid to assessing the progress made towards the goal of universal ratification of international human rights treaties and protocols adopted within the framework of the United Nations system. The programme of activities for the fiftieth anniversary of Universal Declaration on Human Rights also aims to promote universal ratification. In this context, the chairpersons may wish to discuss what further steps could be taken to achieve universal ratification, including a plan of action. Moreover, they may wish to discuss their role in the preparation of, and their participation in, the Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations and the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

13. Adoption of the report

The eighth meeting of chairpersons will adopt its report to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.